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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Aftermath of Annapolis Conference

Key stories in the media:

All media led with the concluding ceremony at Annapolis on Tuesday, in which President Bush read a joint statement by Israel and the PA, in which they agreed to immediately launch peace negotiations in order to reach an agreement by the end of 2008. Reading from the

statement, the President said: "We agreed to immediately launch good faith, bilateral negotiations in order to conclude a peace treaty resolving all outstanding issues, including core issues, without exception." According to the statement, Israel and the PA also agreed to implement their commitments under the Roadmap. Ha'aretz quoted sources in the Israeli delegation as saying that the Palestinians had refused to sign the document until the last minute.

Ha'aretz reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas to "stop the games." Leading media quoted Secretary Rice as saying on Tuesday that PM Ehud Olmert and President Abbas will come to the White House today to officially start the negotiations.

Banners: "Negotiations on Final Status to Get Underway in Two Weeks" (Ha'aretz); "A New Beginning" (Yediot); "The Test Year" (Maariv); "The Goal: A Peace Agreement in One Year" (The Jerusalem Post); "Agreement at Annapolis: A Palestinian State by End of 2008 (Makor Rishon-Hatzofe); " Annapolis: Israel and the Palestinians to Try to Reach Full Agreement in a Year" (Hamodi'a); "Olmert: 'Reality Created in 1967 Will Change Significantly; Israel Willing to Make a Compromise Rife with Risks" (Yated Ne'eman); and "The Conference Is Over. What's Next - the Peace Process?" (The Russian-language Vesty); and the following Arabic-language websites: Arabs48 (affiliated with the Balad Party): "Annapolis Conference, the Last Chance" and "I'm the Police... of the Middle East" (a pun on "Anna," "I am" in Arabic). Assennara: "Olmert Pledged to Do his Utmost to Complete the Peace Agreement"; Al-Ittihad: "Annapolis Conference Swings within American-Israeli Aggression Strategy"; and Ashams Radio: "Moscow to Host the Next Meeting of the Middle East Process."

Ha'aretz highlighted comments by President Bush: "With leaders of courage and conviction on both sides, now is the time to seek the peace that both sides desire" and President Abbas: "Our region stands at a crossroad that separated two historical phases, pre-Annapolis and post-Annapolis." In his address, Abbas called for an end to the "occupation of all Palestinian lands since 1967, including East Jerusalem, as well as the Syrian Golan and occupied Lebanese territory," as well as a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem. "We need East Jerusalem to be our capital, and to establish open relations with West Jerusalem," he continued, urging respect for the holy places of all religions.

Various media quoted Olmert as saying that he did not come to Annapolis to "settle historical accounts" for the conflict, adding that he was aware of that Palestinians too have suffered greatly. Olmert expressed hopes that the sides could resolve the refugee issue, one of the toughest sticking points. "Israel will be part of an international mechanism that will assist in finding a solution to this problem," he said.

Among the participants of the conference were the foreign ministers of most Arab states, including Saudi Arabia,. Maariv noted that the Saudi Ambassador to the U.S., Adil al-Ahmad al-Jubayr, applauded PM Olmert's speech. Israel Radio quoted Deputy Syrian FM Faisal Mekdad as saying that Syria favors peace, but that ties with Israel will only be possible when it fully withdraws to the 1967 borders.

Israel Radio reported that opposition leaders from the Right and Left were critical of Annapolis: While Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu told the radio that more Israeli concessions will not bring peace, Yahad-Meretz leader MK Yossi Beilin said that Olmert had not gone far enough to compromise with the Palestinians. The media quoted Avigdor Lieberman and Eli Yishai, the respective leaders of Yisrael Beiteinu and Shas, as saying that the Annapolis conference was pathetic, but that they would remain in the government. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe and other media reported that the Likud and other right-wing elements are increasing their call on those parties to quit the government coalition.

Major media reported that Olmert will discuss the Iranian issue in his meeting with President Bush today.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Gen. James Jones, the former commander of NATO's military forces in Europe, is touted for chief U.S. monitor of the Roadmap, as mandated by the joint statement.

Israel Radio quoted Israel's Ambassador to the U.S., Sallai Meridor,

as saying that the Arab states can do much more for the diplomatic process.

Ha'aretz reported that FM Tzipi Livni told the Arab foreign ministers at Annapolis that Israel is extending its hand in peace to the entire Arab world.

Ha'aretz reported that on Tuesday one person was killed and dozens wounded when Palestinian police opened fire on a demonstration in Hebron against the Annapolis conference. Seven other Palestinians, all armed, were killed in clashes with IDF soldiers in the Gaza Strip.

Ha'aretz and other media reported that on Tuesday the High Court of Justice ruled that the Winograd Commission does not have to include comments about individuals in its final report on the government's handling of the Second Lebanon War, nor does it have to send warning letters to those who may be harmed by its conclusions.

The Jerusalem Post reported that President Bush has met with American-Jewish author Roy Neuberger, who divides his time between New York and Jerusalem and has written "2020," a thriller about a massive Islamic terror attack against the U.S. and the West.

Yediot reported that Nobel Peace Prizewinner and former U.S. Vice President Al Gore will visit Israel next year.

Ha'aretz reported that the Netherlands' largest trade union has shelved its plan to hold a Palestinian solidarity conference on Thursday, the 60th anniversary of the UN vote on the Partition Plan. The move, which ended concerns of a boycott against Israel, came after the Histadrut Labor Federation insisted it be invited.

Aftermath of Annapolis Conference:

Summary:

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "As one might have expected, the Americans overdid the festivities."

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn and Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The [joint Israeli-Palestinian] declaration contains two elements that will serve the Israeli right wing in attacks it is expected to make on the Prime Minister [the comparison made between Palestinian and Israeli terrorism and the rejection of Israel's position on the timetable]."

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in Ha'aretz: "Whoever heard [National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley] talk this week about the long and arduous and boring road to building a Palestinian state understood that Bush will not be 'Mr. Palestine.'"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv: "Bush wanted to protect peace ... but did not know that he was actually applying the ... protection to Olmert."

Columnist and popular TV talk show host Yair Lapid wrote in Yediot Aharonot: "In the Middle East, one should not declare successes too soon, but neither should one hurry to announce failures."

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in Ha'aretz: "If Israel refuses to incorporate Gaza and include Hamas in the talks, there is no chance of reaching a solution -- certainly not within a year. In such a case, it will keep clinging to the Roadmap as a shield against reaching a deal."

Editor-in-Chief David Horovitz wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "If Intifada-style terrorism rages afresh ... then the eloquence of the speakers and the array of their supporters will count for nothing."

Senior columnist Haggai Huberman wrote on page one of the

nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe (11/28): "The joint understanding, and President Bush's speech, expressed a complete Israeli collapse on Tuesday."

Block Quotes:

I. "They Overdid It"

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (11/28): "As one might have expected, the Americans overdid the festivities. Someone unfamiliar with Middle East affairs might have thought that Tuesday's ceremony marked the signing of an eternal peace agreement, not the beginning of the beginning of negotiations, under difficult conditions.... President Bush spoke as a person who believes that here in Annapolis, he created the infrastructure for a new coalition against what is called in diplomatic language 'extremists,' and in more concrete terms, Iran and fundamentalist movements in the Muslim world. If he wished to inspire his Arab listeners with this talk, it is doubtful whether he succeeded. There was little inspiration in the room, only the chilly politeness of those who have a great deal to say, but a clear interest in not saying it. Whatever the conference at Annapolis brings, if at all, it is a great success for U.S. diplomacy. The entire world, including the Arab world, came under the aegis of America, like in the good old days (for the US) of the early 1990s."

II. "Who's in Favor of Ending (Israeli) Terrorism?"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn and Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (11/28): "The [joint Israeli-Palestinian] declaration contains two elements that will serve the Israeli right wing in attacks it is expected to make on the Prime Minister. The first is the comparison the declaration makes between 'terrorism and incitement that is perpetrated by Palestinians or Israelis.' Translation: Olmert agreed that Israel too is responsible for terrorism and incitement against the Palestinians, and that America will decide in every case who is inciting and who is a terrorist. No public relations spin will be able to erase that. The comments Ariel Sharon's government presented for the Roadmap specifically rejected the requirement that Israel 'cease the violence and the incitement against the Palestinians.' Now Israel has given up on its opposition and a moral comparison has been established, which leaves Olmert with a lot of explaining to do. The second problematic element, from Israel's point of view, is the commitment to 'make every effort' to complete the agreement by the end of 2008. On this matter, the Palestinian demand for a timetable was accepted, and Israel's position, which proposed to leave the timing unspecified, was rejected."

III. "To Palestine via the Side Road"

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in Ha'aretz (11/28): "A source who knows both Bush and Rice described the difference between them this week: Rice understands nothing at all about politics while Bush understands mainly politics.... Bush has another year in office and his National Security Advisor, Stephen Hadley, this week met with Jewish and Christian leaders from the concerned opposition and even succeeded in calming their fears. He sounded to them sober and without illusions. Annapolis is not a move but rather an attempt to start a process, he said. He is quite cautious and he too, like Abbas and perhaps also like Olmert, has the label of a dull technocrat. He never starred like Rice on the covers of magazines and never enjoyed the kind of public relations that she is used to getting. But Hadley is a much more effective national security adviser than Rice was. Whoever heard him talk this week about the long and arduous and boring road to building a Palestinian state understood that Bush will not be 'Mr. Palestine.' If Abbas can, let him be."

IV. "Making Peace for the Cameras"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv (11/28): "[On Tuesday President Bush] gave the audience a victory look. Had he glanced to the left, Bush would have seen Ehud Olmert, giving his own victory look at the

television cameras. Olmert is Tuesday's real winner. Bush wanted to protect peace ... but did not know that he was actually applying the ... protection to Olmert.... Almost everyone received what they wanted at Annapolis. Each one spoke to his own audience. Bush celebrated the last pose as world leader, just like in the past. Abu Mazen returned to Ramallah without yielding, with the revival of the Palestinian track."

IV. "Cheap Pessimism"

Columnist and popular TV talk show host Yair Lapid wrote in Yediot Aharonot (11/28): "It is no accident ... that the origin of the phrase 'haste is from the devil' is from Arabic. In the Middle East, one should not declare successes too soon, but neither should one hurry to announce failures. This can be attested to by all those who dismissed the chances of peace with Egypt and Jordan, as well as those who prophesized that 'there will be no disengagement,' and those who promised -- just on Tuesday -- that the Syrians would not go because the Iranians would not permit them. We should not make light of the sincerity of Olmert's and Abu Mazen's intentions. They both mainly stand to lose from the process that was renewed on Tuesday, and we should ask ourselves why they decided nonetheless to commit to it before the entire world.... Pessimism, like cynicism, is a wonderfully easy solution. It is also a conservative trait of people who believe that only the reality that is familiar to them is valid."

VI. "Bring in Hamas"

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in Ha'aretz (11/28): "If Arab states -- headed by Egypt and Saudi Arabia -- manage to revive talks between Fatah and Hamas, Abbas would be hard-pressed to reject Hamas, especially as Saudi Arabia has strengthened his standing by attending Annapolis. Moreover, how could Abbas hold negotiations with Israel while Gaza is running out of fuel and its electricity is being reduced? Washington too should find a way to redefine its insistence on 'disbanding terror infrastructure,' a motto set in stone on the Roadmap -- a motto that has so far thwarted the Roadmap's implementation. If Israel refuses to incorporate Gaza and include Hamas in the talks, there is no chance of reaching a solution -- certainly not within a year. In such a case, it will keep clinging to the Roadmap as a shield against reaching a deal."

VII. "Going for Broke"

Editor-in-Chief David Horowitz wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (11/28): "The bottom line of the process formally revived here at Annapolis is that it represents a case of going for broke -- of seeking to achieve the hitherto unattainable final peace agreement within barely a year, before the Bush era is over, before the extremists have gathered further strength. But though Olmert has agreed to sever the revived diplomatic effort from the ever-present security concerns, it is the reality on the ground that, as always, will determine the fate of this new effort. If Intifada-style terrorism rages afresh, if Abbas proves incapable of marshalling the strength to thwart it, and if the wide Arab and international backing evidenced here is of irrelevant practical effect, then the eloquence of the speakers and the array of their supporters will count for nothing."

VIII. "Complete Israeli Collapse"

Senior columnist Haggai Huberman wrote on page one of the nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe (11/28): "The joint understanding, and President Bush's speech, expressed a complete Israeli collapse on Tuesday, a withdrawal from all the principles that had guided the government thus far on the way to Annapolis.... Olmert has backed down from the demand based on the Roadmap, according to which the next stage of the agreement will only be implemented after the Palestinians fight terror.... Olmert for the first time adopted the Arab initiative -- which presents the toughest Arab positions such as an uncompromising right of return and a withdrawal from all of East Jerusalem -- by stating that he 'appreciates and respects it, and values its contribution.' Bush, for the first time, talked about the Israeli 'occupation,' when he said that the Israelis must show that they are willing to put an end to the occupation that began in 1967. Bush did not mention the

letter to Sharon in which he agreed to recognize settlement blocs or the reality that has changed since 1967. Bush did not mention any issue in his speech that is of significance to Israel. For instance, he did not mention the rocket fire."

MORENO